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ABSTRACT

Preliminary research into the effect of women's and black's caucuses on professional associations in the social sciences is discussed. Primary focus is on the American Economics Association, the American Political Science Association, and the American Sociological Association. The authors note that only in the social sciences has the discipline itself been labeled as pervasively biased against women and blacks. The research (in progress) centers on the degree and manner in which the associations have accommodated or resisted the concerns of the caucuses. Data are being gathered from documents obtained from professional associations and interviews with caucus leaders and major officers of the professional societies. In addition, participant-observation methods are used in official business meetings and committee sessions of annual meetings. Questions which the researchers seek to answer deal with how the caucuses were conceived, what demands they made, what association leaders perceive the caucuses to be seeking, why the caucuses used the tactics they did, to what extent they were effective, and what significant changes have occurred in association and caucus structures and functions. Emphasis is on distinguishing formal from substantive changes within the associations and determining the degree of equality that has been achieved and is attributed to the caucus efforts. (Author/KC)

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SEX AND RACE CAUCUSES IN ACADEMIC PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS: SOME PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS*

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I

The Roles of Academic Associations

The study in which we are engaged attempts to examine the responses of essentially white male-dominated academic professional associations in the social sciences to the challenges of female and black caucuses in the decade 1965 to 1975. The three associations on which we focus intensively are the American Economics Association, the American Political Science Association, and the American Sociological Association.

Important changes have occurred in all three of the associations as a consequence of the caucus thrusts. For example, each of the associations has (a) established first ad hoc and then standing committees on the status of women and blacks in the profession, (b) conducted studies of the roles of women and blacks in academic and related institutions, (c) developed special programs for the recruitment, training and employment of blacks and women, (d) supported government policies aimed at reducing sex and race discrimination in academic departments, and (e) published articles, monographs, and reports on sex and race discrimination in the profession. The caucuses can claim substantial credit for increases in the number of blacks and females appointed to important decision-making groups such as councils and boards of directors or elected to high offices; also for large numbers of women and blacks reading papers, serving on panels, chairing sessions and otherwise actively participating in annual meetings, and serving as editors of professional journals. Other changes, more subtle, but equally important, have occurred during the past decade; they are likely to continue although in less dramatic form.

The object of our research is to produce a study which will account for

the degree to which, and the manner in which, the associations have accommodated or resisted the concerns and demands of the caucuses. We have been particularly interested in the ways in which established white male sociologists have responded to the caucuses which held them largely responsible for institutionalized racism and sexism.

While all the social science professional associations have been significantly influenced, and in similar ways, by their respective female and black caucuses, only the three indicated above will be intensively examined; the others will receive careful but less detailed attention.

The social sciences have had a distinctive experience with sex and racial caucuses. Whereas virtually all professional societies -- in social sciences, natural sciences and humanities alike -- have been heavily pressured to give women and blacks a more equitable role within the societies and within the professions, only in the social sciences has the <u>discipline itself</u> been attacked at root. Although the American Physical Society, for instance, has been urged by race and sex groups to enlarge professional opportunities for minorities, the dissidents have not suggested that physics is, at bottom, a racist or sexist discipline or that black physics and female physics are necessary to complement white male physics. In the social sciences, in contrast, and especially in sociology, caucus demands and protests have gone to basic disciplinary paradigms and received knowledge, which have been labeled as pervasively biased against women and blacks. Even though the associations may not be held directly responsible, or even primarily responsible, for the bias, the caucuses have viewed the profes-

sional societies as among important vehicles for bringing about the desired changes.

Within the social sciences caucus criticism has not been parceled out equally. Sociology has been more severely criticized for disciplinary bias than has political science, and political science more severly than economics. The results can be seen in different styles and patterns of accommodation within the associations, which represent the major organized expression of each of the several disciplines. While the three associations have made roughly equal efforts to curtail discrimination in recruitment, training and hiring, they have varied significantly in their reactions to the allegedly biased content of their subject matter.

We have formed these tentative conclusions partly on the basis of an initial scrutiny of the literature by and about the associations. The conjectures are supported also by a considerable amount of participant observation. We are active members of the American Sociological Association; my wife and fellow scholar, Jane Cassels Record, is a member of the American Economics Association. We have presented papers, jointly and separately, to the ASA, AEA, and American Political Science Association and APA. In recent years we have attended almost all of the three sets of annual meetings.

The first author has served on national and regional committees dealing with the status of women and minorities in the sociology profession and in the association itself.

Whereas some studies of the roles of caucuses in professional associa-

tions have been done in recent years, no study has singled out the social sciences. Further, none has dealt with female and black caucuses except in parenthetical and incidental ways. The reach of most inquiries has been directed primarily at political caucuses. Although some conservative "counter caucuses" did develop in professional groups, they do not appear to have been particularly significant, and most studies of political caucuses have selected those self-designated as radical. The studies came after radical caucuses peaked and were usually losing strength. In contrast, our study deals with caucuses that remain lively within each of the associations, although the women's caucus in economics has been largely replaced by an official committee.

At this point we would like to cite a few examples of the literature which underscore the distinctiveness of our effort. Bloland and Bloland in American Learned Societies in Transition consider the impact of internal dissent and recession on three American learned societies, including the APSA. However, their focus is on radical political caucuses with little or no attention to those of women and blacks. Ira E. Wessler in The Political Resolutions of American Learned Societies, a doctoral dissertation written in 1973, studied 58 learned societies, 22 in the humanities, 29 in the natural sciences, and 7 in the social sciences. He gives little attention to the resolutions introduced by caucuses of women and blacks. John Voss and Paul L. Ward in 1970 brought out a collection of essays by prominent academicians under the title, Confrontation and Learned Societies. None of the contributors, however, deals with confrontations initiated by women and blacks. Indeed, the essays are sorely lacking in empirical con-

tent and tend to be ruminative. The Fall, 1969 issue of The Antioch Review contains four major essays on political dissent in the Modern Language Association, the American Historical Association, the American Political Science Association, and the American Sociological Association. Here, as in other studies, little attention is given to the role of female and black dissent. Further, the writers are all white males and have themselves been radical caucus participants. Earlier studies of learned societies such as Joseph C. Keiger's American Learned Societies, 1963, and Ralph S. Bates' Scientific Societies in the United States, 1948, failed to anticipate the emergence of dissent based on radical politics, sexual discrimination and racial exclusion.

As indicated previously, the associations have fostered studies of the issues posed by the caucuses; for example, the extent of discrimination by academic departments and in content of accumulated literature of the discipline. Yet practically no inquiry has been sponsored by the associations on the caucuses themselves, as social and political movements -- this despite the fact that the social sciences are disciplines for comprehending social phenomena such as caucuses. (Social scientists are more apt to study dissent in organizations other than their own.) Minutes of the meetings of governing bodies contain considerable exploration of the roles which caucuses have played and ought to play within the societies. From the minutes one can gain some information about specific developments and disparate views. One will find, however, no systematic account of caucus origins and development; nor will one find an overall theoretical assessment of their implications for either discipline or organization. In large measure, sex and race

caucuses have been dealt with bureaucratically wherever possible.

The caucuses themselves are important sources of information, but they are not like to provide strong, research-based findings dealing with their own histories, careers, methods, structures and influences, either within or outside the respective associations. Not only do the caucuses lack sufficient resources; their leaders, in addition, may be, qua leaders of protest movements, ideologically encumbered. This is not to suggest that caucus leaders do not have other identities as scholars; and it will serve the disciplines well if participant-observers eventually evaluate and report their experiences.

At present we know of only tentative research projects aimed at race and sex caucuses in the social sciences; however it would be surprising, in view of the importance of the subject, if others are not in process or in embryo. The caucus experience is sufficiently complex to warrant several studies; there are far-reaching questions concerning the origins, mechanisms, and influences of caucuses which ought to be engaged from various perspectives, while the events and subtleties are still fresh, when most of the participants and much of the casual literature are still available.

Basically, our overall task entails gathering, developing, and interpreting two kinds of data: (1) documents, official and semiofficial, and in some cases personal, which can be gotten from the professional associations and from the caucuses, and (2) interviews with caucus leaders and major officers of the professional societies who held their positions for significant periods of time during the 1965-1975 decade.

The documentary data are quite diverse, ranging from sophisticated, association-sponsored research reports on women and blacks to leaflets and brochures distributed by the caucuses at annual association meetings. Documents include materials for general public distribution as well as restricted, "in-house" papers. Although some reports and other materials have been published in the official journals, such as the American Economic Review, the American Sociologist and the APSA's PS, others can be obtained only at association or caucus headquarters. Without doubt obscure caucus papers will elude us. However, we have been able to obtain and digest a substantial amount of miscellaneous documents from these sources. We have also interviewed -- and will continue to interview -- caucus members and ex-members. The limitations of a documentary record itself have been challenging rather than prohibitive.

Our informal interviews to date deal with the attitudes, policies and actions of both association and caucus participants, particularly official personnel. While we are already acquainted with or in correspondence with many association and caucus offiers, we have drawn heavily on consultants to identify other protagonists or responders who helped to shape the interaction patterns. Naturally the documentary and interview data will need to be continously checked against each other, with attempts to reconcile -- or if that is impossible, to evaluate -- significant discrepancies.

A third source of data is our participant-observation of the often prickly encounters between association and caucus advocates in varying settings: official business meetings, committee sessions, and scholarly

discussions at the annual meetings of the societies; plus informal sessions either chance or arranged. With respect to the latter, in a few instances we played the role of convenor. In others we were asked to participate as "neutral but interested" parties. Such involvement helped precipitate our interest in doing systematic research.

We have reviewed a limited amount of secondary data which can be re-analysed to shed some light on association-caucus relations.

Many of the documentary data are available at the respective association headquarters. We need extended access to the appropriate files. Preliminary interviews and correspondence with executive officers of the three associations indicate their receptivity to our research. But giving full access to outsiders is a step they would not take without qualification.

We have raised and are seeking the answers to a number of critical questions: How were the caucuses conceived? What specific demands did they make? What did association leaders perceive the caucuses to be seeking? Whay were the perceived implications of the demands? What responses were made and why?

How did black and women caucus leaders perceive the associations themselves? How did they view the radical caucuses which sometimes deplored the treatment of blacks and women and made overtures for cooperation? Why did the caucuses use the tactics they did? To what extent was each effective? In the eyes of the participants did the caucuses succeed or fail? What mutually accommodative patterns did the associations and the caucuses develop over time? What significant changes have occured in association and

caucus structures and functions? In what degree has the interaction become bureaucratized? Are caucuses now a more or less permanent part of the associations, or are they likely to pass from the scene? What does the future shape of the caucus-association relations appear to be? What steps seem appropriate, within alternative value perspectives, for refining and bettering the association-caucus relationship? For example, how might tensions between the two be constructively directed toward ending sex and race discrimination in the professions?

How have the associations, as custodians of the disciplines, responded to challenges that the disciplines themselves are white-male-dominated and therefore racist and sexist? To what extent have the programs of the annual meetings changed, not only in numbers of blacks and women reading papers, but also in the range of subjects and in definition of what constitutes scholarly discourse? Has there been a change in the criteria used to select papers for inclusion in the program? Have the content and temper of dialogue and discourse changed? Are such changes reflected in the contents of journals sponsored by the associations? (The impressions of interviewees will be cross-checked against the contents of annual-meeting programs and journals from 1965 to 1975 and for the immediately preceding era.)

It is important to distinguish formal from substantive changes within the associations and to examine the matrix of change. We are trying to determine the de facto degree of equality that has been achieved and is attributable to the efforts of the caucuses themselves. To what degree

had associations been, since their founding more than seven decades ago, racist and sixist preserves -- quiet and genteel, to be sure, but ideologically walled preserves nonetheless?

In gathering and analysing the data, we must rely to considerable degree upon our own judgments and previous experience in this kind of research. That experience has been substantial and recent. During 1972 and 1973 the first author concentrated upon inquiry into the interactions of white sociologists who specialized in race relations and participants in black studies movements. He visited seventy campuses across the country for in-depth interviews with more than 200 sociologists and 60 black studies directors, inter alios. Funded by grants from the Russell Sage Foundation, the Metropolitan Applied Research Center, and the American Philosophical Society, the research not only extended his experience and skills but also led to publication of a dozen or so articles in the professional journals. We have an additional asset in the experience and judgment of many colleagues, each of whom not only is professionally competent but also has been a leader in the very movements which we purport to study.

We have a great deal of consideration to what a survey questionnaire might contribute to the study. We concluded that a formal questionnaire or some similar device, however sophisticated, could not get at the subtleties of the conflicts and tensions which have marked the relations of associations and caucus leaders; and much of the interaction essence is captured in those subtleties. Nor would such an instrument reveal very much about the whole range of informal relations and their significance for the more readily measured

changes. Only in a structured but openended interview is one likely to get the information and reflections necessary for the kind of study we wish to make.

In any case the caucuses in the academic professional association promise to be around for a long time to come. Although their influences have been mixed, they have had a significant impact upon both the ideological and organizational dimensions of the professional associations which merit immediate and continuing exploration.

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